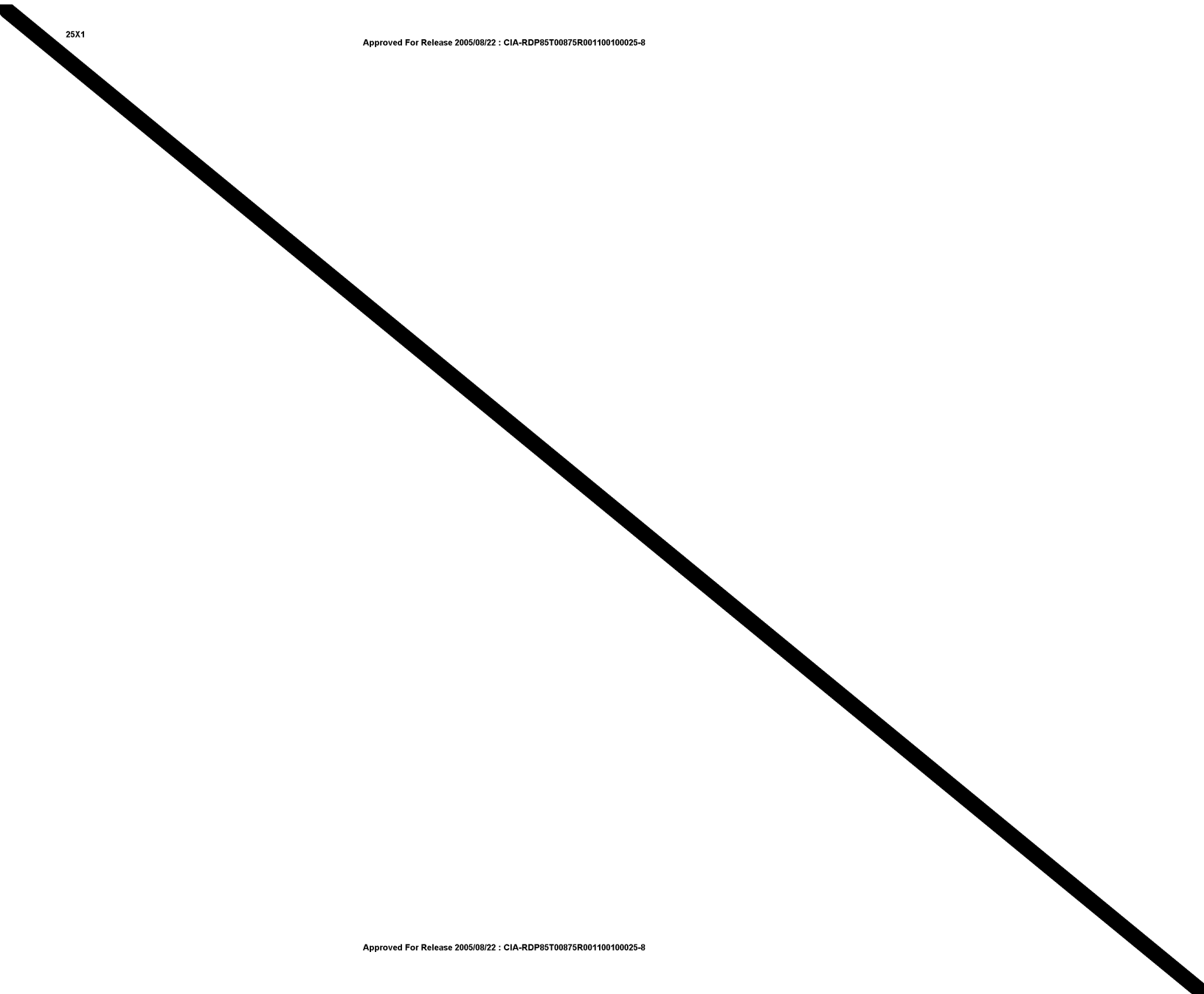

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

The Geneva Disarmament Conference:
Status And Prospects

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
16 February 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Geneva Disarmament Conference: Status and Prospects

Introduction

Until overshadowed by the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT) that began in 1969 at Helsinki, the multilateral arms control conference at Geneva was the primary vehicle for international negotiation on disarmament measures. Although there has been widespread dissatisfaction with the pace of its accomplishments, the conference nevertheless has accounted for all but one of the arms-control agreements reached in recent years. (The Treaty of Tlatelolco banning nuclear weapons in Latin America was the exception.) Last year, after two years of work, the 25 participating nations of the conference completed work on the treaty limiting military utilization of the ocean floor, and it was opened for signature last week. The Geneva talks resume on 23 February, and the chief focus of attention in this session is expected to be the problem of controls on chemical and biological weapons (CBW). This memorandum will briefly review the background of the Geneva conference, its component groups and their particular objectives, the specific issues on the 1971 agenda, and the general outlook with respect to the all-important problem of monitoring and verifying compliance with arms accords.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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Origins of the Geneva Disarmament Conference

1. The first resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly after its convocation in 1946 established the UN Atomic Energy Commission and assigned it the urgent task of making specific proposals for the elimination of atomic and other weapons of mass destruction from national armaments. For the next fifteen years the General Assembly remained the principal venue for arms-control discussions, but the debates became increasingly unwieldy and contentious as the nonaligned nations became more and more insistent on comprehensive disarmament measures. As a result, the major powers began to find it more useful to hold a series of ad hoc, inter-bloc conferences, and in 1959 the Big Four foreign ministers set up a Ten-Nation Committee on Disarmament. The five members of this Committee from the Warsaw Pact were the USSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Romania; Canada, France, Italy, and the UK joined the US on the NATO side.

2. Continuing pressure from the nonaligned countries, combined with promising developments in discussions among the Ten, soon led the superpowers to decide to re-establish a more representative disarmament negotiating body, but one that was less explicitly tied to the General Assembly. The result, announced in December 1961 and endorsed unanimously by the Assembly that same month, was the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC). The nonaligned states invited by the superpowers to participate with the Ten in periodic meetings in Geneva were Brazil, Burma, Ethiopia, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Sweden and Egypt. When the ENDC began to consider arms control measures, especially the Limited Test Ban (LTB), France opted out because it was not prepared to adhere to the ban at that time. Paris, however, has not withdrawn officially from the Geneva talks.

Accomplishments since 1962

3. The ENDC was largely responsible for the conclusion of four principal disarmament accords over the past decade: the LTB Treaty of 1963, the

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1966 Outer Space Treaty, the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) opened for signature in 1968, and this year's seabeds treaty. These agreements were drafted by the superpowers--in the cases of the LTBT and the NPT, with the UK as a cosponsor--after thorough discussion both with the other participants in the Geneva talks and with other nonrepresented, but vitally concerned governments like West Germany and Japan. The ENDC also played an important role in securing collateral or confidence-building measures, such as the "hot line" between Moscow and Washington.

Problem Areas

4. Nevertheless, the ENDC has made little headway toward the objective that provided much of the impetus for its creation--to develop a schema for general and complete disarmament (GCD). Although the SALT negotiations have moderated some of the concern over nuclear delivery systems, there is still strong sentiment in favor of negotiations leading to a comprehensive test ban (CTB) and a cut-off of production of fissionable material by the superpoers for weapons purposes. The nonaligned nations recognize that these subjects, as well as the CBW issue, involve fundamental differences between the superpowers over verification procedures, but that does not assuage their unhappiness over the lack of progress by the US and the USSR toward reconciling their views.

5. One consequence of this dissatisfaction has been steady pressure in the UN General Assembly to expand the committee to permit greater nonaligned influence. In the summer of 1969, the superpowers bowed to these concerns first by adding Japan and Mongolia and a little later by inviting six other countries to participate in the Geneva talks: the Netherlands from NATO; Pact member Hungary; and nonaligned nations Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Argentina, and

Morocco. Since this expansion, the talks have been called the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). Both the larger membership and the opening of SALT served to put the CCD and the superpowers in somewhat better repute at the 1969 and 1970 Assemblies.

The Three Groups

6. The Communist delegates at the CCD--6 Warsaw Pact members plus Mongolia--have generally maintained the near identity of views that one would expect. They hold planning meetings before the talks resume each year and presumably meet fairly frequently to discuss tactics after the CCD has convened. The Soviets usually present the major Communist treaty drafts, but they use their allies to offer the subsequent amendments that Moscow deems advisable. Only Romania has not fallen completely in line, opting in 1970 to join a Western-nonaligned working group on GCD at the talks.

7. Since Japan was admitted, the five NATO participants have generally included its representative within their consultation circle at Geneva. Delegates of the five report to the North Atlantic Council at NATO headquarters on a rotating basis. There is a high degree of accord in the Western camp on the principal issues before the CCD, but the allies of the US have never been chary of offering initiatives developed by themselves. Canada and Japan have been particularly active in the CTB field, and in 1970 Italy was the sponsor of the cross-caucus working group on GCD which Romania joined. Italy also played a leading role in the ruckus between the US and EURATOM over the safeguards provisions of the NPT.

8. The nonaligned 12 have never formed a cohesive group at the disarmament talks because of the disparity in their views. There are neutral states such as Sweden, nations generally amenable to Communist views such as Egypt, and Latin American states that are frequently inclined to support

US positions. The major impetus for action within the group comes from its two most voluble members, Mrs. Alva Myrdal of Sweden and Alfonso Garcia Robles of Mexico. Both are adept at twitting the superpowers. Over the years the Swedes have produced some of the best studies at the CCD on verification problems.

CBW

9. A rash of publicity--mostly involving the US--attending several incidents in the late 1960s provoked considerable interest at the CCD in the problem of CBW controls. Capitalizing on this development, the Soviets drafted a convention in 1969 prohibiting the development, production, and stockpiling of CBW agents and requiring the destruction of existing stocks. Although many approved a comprehensive approach, including both CW and BW, most CCD nations have found the Soviets' verification provision--added in 1970--unpalatable. This provision would permit complainants to appeal to the UN Security Council for investigations where the Big Power veto might apply.

10. After the US had announced its decision to renounce any use of toxins, a British draft BW convention of 1969 was refined to include such weapons. The only reference in the British draft to CW, however, merely commits signatories to "negotiations in good faith on effective measures to strengthen the existing constraints..." The verification procedure in the UK text, although more detailed than that of the Soviets, is also by appeal to the Council.

11. The Soviets on occasion have told the US that they could agree to a convention confined to BW agents if certain conditions were satisfied: an end to the use of tear gas and herbicides in Vietnam, and US ratification of the Geneva Protocol of 1925. They

have shown particular interest in a Moroccan proposal that would ban CW and BW in one document, but defer implementation of the CW sections until verification problems can be overcome. The Moroccan initiative reflects the impact of a series of detailed papers prepared by the US--with some help from the Japanese--on the difficulties of verifying a CW ban given the present state of safeguards techniques.

12. As long as there is a propaganda advantage to be gained on CW issues, Moscow is unlikely to move more explicitly in the direction of the Moroccan scheme. The Swedish delegation is also certain to give the US a rough time in the CW area, which is a key concern of Mrs. Myrdal. The CCD conferees will certainly devote a high percentage of their sessions this year to CBW, with considerable pressure likely to develop for agreement on more adequate forms of verification than merely the right to appeal to the Security Council. Over the long term, if not at the coming meeting, the prospect for CCD--and subsequently world-wide--agreement on at least BW controls appears very good.

CTB

13. Since the signing of the LTB in 1963, the nonaligned delegates at the Geneva talks have mounted a campaign of fluctuating intensity to secure a CTB to close off the option still available to the superpowers of conducting underground nuclear tests that cause no radioactive fallout beyond national borders. The advent of SALT has quickened this interest, but the principal stumbling block--the fundamental differences between the US and the USSR over means to ensure compliance--remains a formidable one. The US insists that on-site international inspection, a concept traditionally anathema to the Soviets, be included as a verification option.

14. The other CCD conferees have not been deterred by this impasse and have offered a variety of proposals to facilitate steps toward a CTB. In addition to the cut-off proposition already mentioned, one prominent idea is a treaty banning tests above a specified seismic magnitude--usually 4.5 on the Richter

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scale--and providing for a guaranteed exchange of seismic data. The 4.5 level for detonations presumably would not prevent application of peaceful nuclear explosion technology, but would provide an additional safeguard against accidental venting of radioactive materials into the atmosphere. [redacted] 25X1 25X1

With regard to the data exchange, some countries, under UN auspices, have already begun voluntarily to exchange seismic data.

15. A CTB is second only to CBW in interest to the Geneva delegations this year, but no real progress toward a comprehensive treaty is likely until national verification capabilities are significantly upgraded. Although the outlook for a seismic magnitude treaty is somewhat better, agreement on this probably must wait the demonstrated success of a data exchange program. Should Moscow drop its categorical refusal to participate in such undertakings, progress at the CCD this year in firming up exchange arrangements could be quite significant. The USSR may, however, for propaganda reasons support again the Egyptian call for an unverified moratorium on nuclear testing.

GCD

16. Both of the superpowers submitted draft treaties on GCD at the initial meeting of the Geneva conferees in 1962, and these ostensibly still represent their official objectives. The Soviet text advocated a five-year, three-stage approach to disarmament to be policed indirectly, e.g., by budgetary controls, and by peacekeeping contingents under control of the UN Security Council. The US document also envisaged a three-stage movement toward GCD, but over a longer time frame and with verification by on-site inspection and by UN peacekeeping measures less subject to big-power veto in the Council. Given these diverging philosophies, the conferees rather quickly lost interest in GCD and have since concentrated on more specific or "partial" measures like the LTBT and the NPT.

17. The possibility that a meaningful accord might emerge from SALT, however, has led many of the

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other CCD participants to renew their interest in GCD. They believe that success in the difficult area of controls on nuclear delivery systems could permit rapid agreements further down the disarmament track. To the Soviets' chagrin, Romania in 1970 accepted an Italian bid at the Geneva talks to join a nine-nation ad hoc working group on GCD, but this informal grouping has thus far been unable to make any progress.

18. Three nonaligned states--Mexico, Sweden, and Yugoslavia--remain strongly committed to pushing the GDC concept at Geneva and have drafted their own program on the subject. There is little expectation that anything significant can develop as long as the SALT continue without decisive results, and, as in the case of CTB, it is unlikely that France and Communist China would adhere to general arms control measures anyway. Nevertheless, the nonaligned representatives at the CCD will probably continue to seek, and with some success, to involve allies of the superpowers in the drafting of proposed schemas on GCD.

Other Topics

19. The CCD has served as a useful forum for limited discussion of rather esoteric arms control problems--laser and radiological warfare--and matters of tangential concern, such as the question of a conference on European security. With the US providing much of the impetus, the 25 Geneva conferees in 1970 also delved fairly deeply into the possibility of regional measures to limit conventional arms. The 1971 session is likely to produce intensified interest in the feasibility of monitoring regional bans on arms sales, a subject pushed by Sweden to the dismay of several other nonaligned states represented at Geneva--the Arab states, Pakistan, India, and Argentina.

20. Sweden, using the US and Japanese CW verification studies as models, has drafted a paper to attempt a more systematic, general approach to verification methods that would cut across specific disarmament issues. It hopes to sell this document to the other CCD participants, but the agenda will be confined essentially to precise options on particular subjects. One interesting item that Stockholm

has resurrected--but probably cannot get a hearing for at this time--is the establishment of an International Disarmament Organization, a policing entity referred to in both the US and Soviet GCD treaties of 1962.

Assessment

21. The prospect that the forthcoming session of the CCD will see at best only limited progress toward an agreement on BW controls underscores once more the rather limited results that the postwar disarmament effort has so far achieved and the difficulties confronting a more substantial achievement. Most authorities agree that the LTB was important both as a nonproliferation device and as a curb on nuclear testing that could become a menace to world health. The NPT, hopefully, will also serve to restrain at least some of the threshold countries from acquiring nuclear weapons, and the safeguards provided for by the treaty are an important precedent-setting experiment in enforcement of arms control agreements by international inspection. The outer space and seabeds treaties have likewise been hailed as useful measures against the introduction of weapons of mass destruction in environments where they have not as yet been emplaced.

22. None of these agreements, however, has served to slow the nuclear arms race between the superpowers, prevented the nuclear nonsignatories--China and France--from atmospheric testing to strengthen their nuclear arsenals, nor greatly discouraged some of the advanced countries from efforts to produce their own nuclear weapons. Not only have these agreements failed to prevent the introduction of increasingly sophisticated arms into the Middle East, and other areas of conflict, they have not even discouraged the exporters of arms from seeking markets in areas relatively free of regional tension and comparatively remote from big-power rivalries. Moreover, the sum total of money saved by these agreements is too little to alleviate, far less correct, the alleged imbalance in the priority of world expenditures--an imbalance that the General Assembly's forthcoming study of the "social and economic consequences of the arms race" will likely spotlight once more.

23. How to narrow the gap between the modest gains the disarmament effort has scored and the much larger needs to which all governments at least pay lip service is obviously a problem that will not be

resolved at this year's CCD session. All of the participants probably agree that the work in Geneva will depend on the prevailing world atmosphere--that the chances for moving ahead would be greatly improved by a substantial agreement in SALT, by a running down of the Indochina War, and by a negotiated settlement in the Middle East, especially were this to include a regional arms limitations agreement and international peacekeeping arrangements. But most of the participants probably believe that all that can be realistically hoped for is to secure the limited beachheads that have been established--e.g., by the verification arrangements under the NPT--while chipping away at specific issues such as CBW.

24. As the persisting interest in GCD and last year's proposals from Sweden would indicate, however, there is a minority point of view that continues to hold that specific measures must be accompanied by a more comprehensive approach if any really significant breakthroughs are to be attained. Their position starts from the premise that limited agreements will remain only peripherally beneficial unless the central problem of verification is solved through the creation of international mechanisms of general application; only then, they contend, will it be possible to move away from the syndrome in which both the nuclear and non-nuclear nations sponsor only measures applicable primarily to the other.